

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: **HUMAN SERVICES** (Including Employment & Training, Office for the Aging, Veterans' Services, Youth Programs)

DATE: **JUNE 9, 2009**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS SIMMES
 BENTLEY
 GIRARD
 STEC
 VANNESS
 SOKOL
 TAYLOR

OTHERS PRESENT:

CANDACE KELLY, DIRECTOR, OFFICE FOR THE AGING
CHRISTIE SABO, FISCAL MANAGER, OFFICE FOR THE AGING
SHARON SANO, SENIOR COUNSELOR, EMPLOYMENT AND
 TRAINING ADMINISTRATION
FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND FISCAL
 SERVICES
JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF
 ADMINISTRATIVE AND FISCAL SERVICES
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
SUPERVISORS O'CONNOR
 PITKIN
 STRAINER
 KENNY
 THOMAS
 CHAMPAGNE
RICHARD KELLY, PERSONNEL OFFICER
MARGARET SING SMITH, DIRECTOR, YOUTH BUREAU
TODD LUNT, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR
SHERIFF BUD YORK
TRUDY VANRYND, MEALS ON WHEELS VOLUNTEER
WILLIAM BROWN, TOWN OF QUEENSBURY RESIDENT
ALYSON MARTIN, *THE POST STAR*
SARAH MCLENITHAN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mrs. Simmes called the meeting of the Human Services Committee to order at 11:00 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Sokol, seconded by Mr. Girard and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Sharon Sano, Senior Counselor for the Employment and Training Administration, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Ms. Sano requested to amend the 2009 County budget to increase estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$6,940 to reflect the receipt of Federal funds.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. VanNess and carried unanimously to amend the 2009 County budget to increase estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$6,940 as outlined above and to forward same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the request to Amend the County budget is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Sano requested to amend the resolution request presented at the May 21, 2009 meeting of the Human Services Committee with regards to the contract with Washington–Saratoga–Warren-

Hamilton-Essex Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to provide employment and training services for the summer youth employment program. She explained that the contract amount had been increased from \$15,178 to \$16,698 due to an increase in the operational time that would be allowed. She noted that the previous request had sufficient contract commencement and termination dates.

Motion was made by Mr. Girard, seconded by Mr. VanNess and carried unanimously to amend the contract with Washington-Saratoga-Warren-Hamilton-Essex Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to increase the amount of the contract for an amount not to exceed \$16,698, to provide employment and training services for the summer youth employment program, as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the June 19, 2009 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Sano requested permission for an additional contract for the summer youth employment program with the Warren County Cornell Cooperative Extension, commencing June 29, 2009 and terminating August 31, 2009, for a total amount not to exceed \$4,000. She explained that the program would provide career exploration and academic services.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Girard and carried unanimously to authorize a contract with the Warren County Cornell University Cooperative Extension in the amount not to exceed \$4,000 to provide employment and training services for the summer youth employment program as outlined above, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the June 19, 2009 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Before beginning discussion on the Meals on Wheel (MOW) Program, Mrs. Simmes provided a brief history on the subject during which she reminded the Committee that the elimination of the evening meals had been discussed at both the September 28, 2008 and the December 2, 2008 Committee meetings. She noted that the Committee had been informed at the May 4, 2009 meeting that the evening meals had been discontinued as a cost saving measure for the County. Mrs. Simmes advised that she was unsure of whether a resolution was necessary to discontinue the evening meals program. She noted that Candace Kelly, Director for the Office for the Aging (OFA), was in attendance to discuss the matter.

Ms. Kelly distributed copies of the agenda to Committee members; a copy of which is on file with the minutes. She apprised that neither she nor any members of her staff were in favor of making cuts to the services provided to the elderly; however, she stated, subsequent to several discussions with the Committee, the Budget Officer and Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative and Fiscal Services, it had been determined that due to budget restraints the evening meals would be discontinued, as it would have the least amount of impact on the elderly.

Ms. Kelly apprised that in 2007, the former Budget Officer had requested that the OFA reduce their budget by \$160,000 and had suggested that they make the reduction by closing a mealsite. Ms. Kelly stated that rather than closing a mealsite to save funds, she proposed the elimination of the evening meals.

In April of 2008, Ms. Kelly stated that the OFA Advisory Council, which consisted of seniors and members of the community suggested that the evening meals be eliminated; however, she said, no action was taken. She reaffirmed what Mrs. Simmes had advised, that the elimination of the evening meals had been discussed at several prior Committee meetings. She noted that she was requested to meet with Mr. Payne on May 27, 2009 and explained that the evening meals were no

longer being delivered. She stated that she had not been advised at that time or in previous discussion that a resolution to eliminate the evening meals.

Ms. Kelly advised that the OFA Advisory Council voted in favor of an increase in the suggested donation from \$2.50 to \$3.00 per meal; however, the increase had yet to be implemented because she wanted to advise the Committee prior to its enactment.

With regards to notifying seniors of the re-evaluation of the evening meals, Ms. Kelly stated a letter had been included in the December of 2008 OFA newsletter. She said the letter explained the budget situation and informed them that if they were homebound and lacked support from family, friends or neighbors and/or were unable to prepare meals, they would continue to be eligible for the evening meal.

Ms. Kelly apprised that the elimination had been an on-going process since January of 2009 in Towns other than the Town of Queensbury and the City of Glens Falls. She said that the feedback she had received from Supervisors from the outlying areas had been that they had received no complaints.

Messrs. Stec, Kenny, Thomas, and Chairman Monroe entered the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

With regards to the Department Head meeting, Ms. Kelly stated that the Budget Officer had advised that the Department Heads should make the determination of what areas could survive with reduced funding. She said that after reviewing the OFA budget a determination was made that there were four areas within the OFA budget where possible decreases could be made, and she listed them as follows:

1. Closing a mealsite. Ms. Kelly said that the mealsite that would have to be closed would have to be either Warrensburg, Chestertown, The Cedars or Luzerne due to the other sites being funded by Hamilton County or SNAP funds. She asserted of the four options, the closing of a mealsite was the least favorable.
2. Laying off one employee. Ms. Kelly advised that this would be a minimal savings to the County since all of the positions within the OFA were reimbursed through Federal and State funds. She noted the estimated savings would be \$3,000. Christine Sabo, Fiscal Manager of the Office for the Aging, pointed out that unemployment costs would have to be considered, as well.
3. Implementing a waiting list for the Meals on Wheels Program. Ms. Kelly explained that this would require that seniors being discharged from the hospital would have to wait until an opening in the program for the noon hot meal to become available.
4. Re-evaluating the evening meals. Ms. Kelly apprised that the determination had been made that eliminating the evening meal would have the least amount of impact on seniors. She said that they had been informed by the State Office for the Aging that only a few Counties in New York State continued to provide evening meals. She stated that the Director of Public Health, County Nurses and Home Health Aides had all advised her that the elimination of the evening meals would have the least amount of impact, as they had viewed that at the end of the week several of the meals were thrown out or given away.

Ms. Kelly emphasized the importance of communication, as she felt the issue would not have received such a harsh reaction if it had been understood who the OFA reported to. She stated that her Office had only received five phone calls from seniors regarding the issue and they had all been in support of the elimination of the evening meal. She reiterated that since January of 2009 Towns other than the Town of Queensbury and the City of Glens Falls had begun to discontinue the evening meals. She asserted that individuals who were in need of the evening meals would continue to receive them.

Ms. Kelly voiced her concern that if the media had not sensationalized the issue, there would not have been such a negative reaction from the public. She advised that if the Committee desired she would reinstate all evening meals; however, she pointed out, funds would have to be sought, as there were insufficient funds to cover the cost of the evening meals.

Mr. Sokol queried how much money would be saved if the evening meals were eliminated excluding the individuals who were in need of the meal. Ms. Sabo referred the Committee to the second page of the agenda packet, which outlined a savings of \$17,543.85 on a quarterly basis. She pointed out that the estimated savings did not take into account the number of evening meals that would be reinstated. Ms. Kelly advised that as of the prior week, two seniors had been reinstated as per their request.

Mr. Taylor inquired as to what the suggested donation amount was for the evening meals and Ms. Kelly replied that it was \$2.00. She explained that the suggested donation was received as a lump sum donation and there was no way to review who was contributing and who was not. She noted that it was a suggested donation and seniors were not required to contribute.

Mr. VanNess stated that he agreed that there was a lack of communication, which was necessary to address. He said that he was unhappy that the seniors were no longer receiving their evening meals and that he was notified of this through the newspaper. He said that although he was aware that the elimination of the evening meals had been discussed at prior meetings, he was not aware that a final decision had been made. He suggested compiling a survey of the seniors who were recipients of the MOW and query whether they would like to continue receiving the evening meal to determine how many would have to be reinstated. He noted that the suggested donation may have to be increased to cover the cost of the evening meals.

Mr. VanNess apprised that he had received a phone call from a wheelchair bound senior regarding their concern with the elimination of the evening meals. Mrs. Simmes advised that her understanding was that if the seniors required the evening meal they would still receive it and Ms. Kelly concurred.

Mrs. Simmes inquired whether any Supervisors had received complaints about the elimination of the evening meals. Mr. Pitkin replied that he had not received any complaints, as in the Town of Thurman the seniors were being provided evening meals if necessary. Messrs. Thomas and Bentley, as well as Mrs. Simmes advised they had received no complaints. Mr. Kenny apprised that he had received one complaint. Chairman Monroe stated that he had received several phone calls and e-mails regarding their concerns with the elimination of the evening meals.

Trudy Vanrynd, MOW Volunteer, apprised that during recent deliveries three people had commented they depended on the meal delivery. Ms. Kelly asserted the importance of receiving feedback from the volunteers, as many of the recipients would not contact the OFA to attempt to have their meals reinstated. Ms. Vanrynd noted that there were also seniors that did not need to

receive meals that participated in the program.

Mr. Girard pointed out that the City of Glens Falls was unique, as it contained several senior citizen complexes. He said that he felt that the seniors in the City of Glens Falls had always been provided for, and he noted he had not received any complaints regarding the elimination of the evening meals.

Mr. Taylor queried what the cost of providing each meal was and Ms. Sabo replied that the system would not allow her to calculate the cost per meal as each site had different costs associated with them; however, she said, the average cost per meal was \$6.00. Mr. Taylor suggested charging more money for the evening meal. Ms. Kelly replied that the evening meal was leftovers that would normally be thrown away. She explained that mealsites prepared food based on the amount of reservations received and the leftovers were frozen to be used at a later time for evening meals.

Mr. Taylor suggested charging seniors for the meals rather than having the suggested donation. Ms. Kelly stated her concern was that seniors that could not afford the cost of the meals would go without rather than complain. Ms. Kelly pointed out that once a year the OFA staff reassessed seniors to ensure that they were in receipt of the necessary services the OFA provided.

Ms. Sabo stated that she was concerned with what type of plan was necessary to keep accurate records of who had paid and who did not on a weekly basis. With regards to seniors in need not calling to request the evening meal, she pointed out that the Public Health Nurses and Home Health Aides would keep the Office apprised if there was a senior that was in need of the evening meals.

Ms. Kelly stated that the phone calls she had received from the Home Health Agencies regarding the elimination of the evening meals advised that they thought it was a great decision due to the amount of wasted food they had noticed.

Mr. Kenny stated that he had received comments from senior citizens who complained that seniors would be losing necessary services while they felt that unnecessary services were being maintained, such as the Sheriff's Boat Patrol or the Fish Hatchery. He asserted that the savings that would be acquired was not worth having seniors forego services. Ms. Sabo reasserted that the evening meal had been eliminated because it had the least amount of impact on seniors while saving the County a substantial amount of funds.

Mr. VanNess queried whether a survey had been attempted to inquire what the need was for an evening meal. Ms. Kelly advised that she had received a few phone calls supporting the elimination of the evening meals in response to the letter apprising of the reassessment of the needs.. She pointed out that the MOW volunteers were keeping the Office apprised of the seniors that were in need of the evening meal.

Mr. VanNess asked whether a specific survey sent to all recipients of both meals would hinder a response as to whether the evening meal was necessary. Ms. Vanrynd replied that if no names were involved, she felt they would respond.

Motion was made by Mr. VanNess and seconded by Mr. Stec to authorize the Director of the Office for the Aging to conduct a survey of participants in the Meals on Wheels Program to determine those who wished to continue receiving the evening meal.

Mr. Taylor requested that the motion include the stipulation that the evening meal would be reinstated until the results of the survey were available and Mr. VanNess agreed.

Ms. Kelly advised that she had no issue with reinstating the evening meal; however, she said, a source of funding for the meals would be necessary. Mr. VanNess questioned whether the results of the survey could be available prior to the next Committee meeting and Ms. Kelly replied affirmatively. Ms. Vanrynd suggested surveying the volunteers for the MOW program, as they would have the knowledge of who was in need of the evening meal.

Mr. Kenny questioned why seniors would request evening meals if they were not in need of them. Ms. Kelly pointed out in previous years the OFA would ask whether the seniors wanted the noon meal or both meals; however, she said, due to budget restraints now when seniors requested evening meals an assessment was performed to ensure they were in need. Mr. Kenny stated that he did not feel there would be a significant change in the number of evening meals required. Ms. Kelly apprised that many seniors had informed her that several of the meals were thrown out or given away.

Mr. Payne questioned when the evening meals in the northern portion of the County had been re-evaluated and Ms. Kelly replied that it was in January of 2009. He pointed out that there had been no issue with the media until the evening meals were re-evaluated for the City of Glens Falls and the Town of Queensbury.

Mr. VanNess advised that the increase in concerns may be due to the difference in population of the northern and southern portion of the County, as the southern portion of the County had a much larger population.

Mr. Stec pointed out that it was necessary for the public to be aware that the \$17,000 per quarter savings to the County was not due to the elimination of the program; it was due to managing the program more efficiently. Mr. Stec asked whether individuals in need were still receiving the evening meal and Ms. Kelly replied affirmatively. She noted that the seniors no longer receiving the evening meals had either thrown the meal away or given it away. Mr. Stec apprised that it was important for the taxpayers to be aware that the County was eliminating \$17,000 in waste.

Ms. Vanrynd pointed out that the MOW program was much cheaper to the County than having to house seniors in a nursing home facility. Ms. Kelly noted that the MOW program cost the County \$7,000 annually per senior compared to the \$90,000 it would cost to house them in a nursing home facility.

Discussion ensued.

Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board, queried whether Ms. Kelly had applied for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act-Nutrition Program for the Elderly funds and Ms. Kelly replied affirmatively. Ms. Sabo reminded the Committee that the Finance Committee had denied the request due to the \$4,843.37 in matching funds that was required. Mrs. Sady pointed out that the request was held because there was no authority on the record for the contingent fund transfer. Mrs. Sady advised that the request would need to include a request for a source of funding. She noted the Humans Services Committee would have to approve the request prior to it being presented to the Finance Committee.

Mr. Pitkin queried whether a verbal survey taken by the MOW volunteers would be more effective

than a written one and Ms. Kelly replied that in some situations a verbal response would be required.

Mrs. Simmes called the question and the motion was carried unanimously to authorize the Director of the Office for the Aging to conduct a survey of participants in the Meals on Wheels Program to determine those who wished to continue receiving the evening meals and to reinstate the evening meal delivery until the results of the survey were received.

Mrs. Sady questioned whether the Committee wished to proceed with the request to amend the County Budget and recommend a source of funding for the matching funds required in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act-Nutrition Program for the Elderly funds. Ms Sabo pointed out that although matching funds were required, it was minimal and would be used for the evening meals expense.

Motion was made by Mr. VanNess, seconded by Mr. Taylor and carried unanimously to amend the 2009 County Budget in the amount of \$26,539 to reflect the receipt of Federal Funds received from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act with a request for a transfer from the Contingent Fund in the amount of \$4,843.37 for the local share. The request was referred to the Finance Committee and a copy of the request to amend the County Budget is on file with the minutes. (Note: Subsequent to the meeting, Ms. Sabo advised that the local share of the grant was only \$2,124).

As there was no further business to come before the Human Services Committee, on motion made by Mr. VanNess and seconded by Mr. Sokol, Mrs. Simmes adjourned the meeting at 11:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sarah McLenithan, Legislative Office Specialist